

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, recently I introduced legislation, H.R. 2694, to elevate the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, to a permanent Cabinet-level position. It has been 31 years since the EPA was first established, and I would suggest to my colleagues that this legislation is long overdue.

This is not the first time the House of Representatives has been asked to consider this legislation, and indeed it is not even the first bill on the subject this year. But in many respects, it is a better bill than its predecessors, and I hope it will move swiftly through the legislative process.

On December 2, 1970, our Nation marked its first major environmental milestone by establishing the Environmental Protection Agency. In so doing, then President Richard Nixon stated, "I am making an exception to one of my own principles: that, as a matter of effective and orderly administration, additional new independent agencies normally should not be created. Because environmental protection cuts across so many jurisdictions and because environmental deterioration is of great importance to the quality of life in our country and the world, I believe that in this case a strong, independent agency is needed."

President Nixon's overriding concern to be addressed by the establishment of the EPA was that although numerous parts of the Government may have been sympathetic to protecting environmental quality, no one distinct department existed to focus solely on our environment. Moreover, the mission statements and purposes across departments necessarily affect how each department views environmental protection, leading to inconsistent and varying ideas of real protection.

Thus, the EPA was organized. Since 1970, we have made a number of important strides to improve our environment, including such historic legislative achievements as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. Today, the administrator of the EPA is a member of President Bush's Cabinet. But, the Administrator serves in that capacity at the pleasure of the country's chief executive officer. If we are truly serious about maintaining our commitment to environmental protection, Cabinet-level status must be made permanent by elevating the EPA to a full department.

In each of the past several Congresses, my colleagues and I have attempted to elevate the EPA to a Cabinet-level department. The closest that we came to achieving this principle occurred in 1993. The base legislation at that time was developed by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), then chairman of the House Committee on Government Operations. This bill, in turn, was similar to legislation crafted by Senator Glenn and considered by the Senate. That bill passed the Senate by a wide margin, 79-15.

The reason to introduce the bill remains as pressing today as it was in

1993 and certainly as it was in 1970. Protecting our environment is a priority for all Americans. To give this function the attention it deserves really necessitates elevating the EPA to the Department of Environmental Protection. H.R. 2694 does precisely this. In no small part, this commitment and elevation of the EPA signals to our world partners and to our own citizens that environmental protection and restoration is at the top of our policy priorities.

Besides elevating the EPA to a full department, we should look upon this as an opportunity to fix long overdue procedural challenges. In particular, we have an opportunity to ensure that in addressing environmental regulations, the Department utilizes the best science that is currently available and that sound public health priorities will actually be addressed by the proposal. It is worth noting that in passing their version of the legislation, the Senate included this very proposal and passed it by a vote of 95-3. It is refreshing to see that sometimes policy considerations can prevail over partisanship.

We face serious challenges to prevent global warming, to reduce toxic emissions, to assure quality air and to prevent other harmful discharges to ensure that we have clean sources of drinking water. These are large challenges with which we cannot afford to play politics. Evaluating the Environmental Protection Agency allows us the opportunity to take politics out of the equation, but we need to do it correctly. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the administration to move forward on this important bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MINNESOTANS MOURN THE DEATH OF KOREY STRINGER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. RAMSTAD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Speaker, the people of Minnesota and Minnesota Vikings football fans around the world are mourning today because we have had a tragic death in the family.

Minnesotans are devastated over the loss of Korey Stringer, the gifted all-pro Minnesota Vikings football player, loving husband and father, popular hero to Minnesota kids and respected role model in our great State.

As Vikings head coach Dennis Green put it, "We have lost a brother, a teammate and a friend. Everybody loved, respected and admired Korey Stringer. He was our gift from heaven."

Mr. Speaker, Minnesota lost more than just the anchor of the Vikings of-

fensive line when Korey Stringer died at 1:50 this morning because of heatstroke. We lost much more than a Pro Bowl football player. We lost one of the finest people in the National Football League and our Twin Cities community.

As my friend Minnesota Vikings all-pro wide receiver Cris Carter said yesterday, "There was not a more well-liked player on our football team, but it's far greater than about football."

Korey was in his seventh season as a Viking after he was drafted in the first round in 1995 as a 20-year-old from Ohio State. Even though Korey was a native of Warren, Ohio, he chose to make the Twin Cities area his permanent home. He was a huge man physically, 6 feet 4, 335 pounds, and his heart was even bigger.

Known as a gentle giant, Korey Stringer gave so much to our Twin Cities community. He established Korey's Crew community service programs at local schools and at the St. Paul public library, and he was always available to help kids when help was needed. He loved to visit kids in local hospitals and schools, and he was one of the most involved Vikings in our community.

□ 2330

Brad Madson, Director of Community Relations for the Vikings said yesterday, "Korey was one of a handful of players who wanted to get involved in the community. When he wasn't performing community service as part of his own Korey's Crew program, he was there supporting his teammates' community efforts."

A fifth-grade teacher at Bancroft Elementary in South Minneapolis, where Korey Stringer visited the kids weekly to talk about the importance of reading and staying in school, paid tribute to Korey yesterday by saying, "Korey Stringer was not commanding or brash. He was genuine and honest, and kids were drawn to him like a magnet."

"When Stringer visited schools, he signed autographs, shook hands and posed for photographs. But then he sat down and listened to the students' stories. He made them smile and laugh. And he came with his oft-repeated message: Read, stay in school, be responsible, be respectful."

Another teacher said yesterday, "A lot of times celebrities come and they spend 5 to 10 minutes, give a speech and then leave. Not Korey Stringer. He arrived early, greeted each youth, took photos with them, asked them about their favorite books and talked to them about them. He stayed until the last kid left. Not only did the Vikings lose a good football player, but the community lost a good man."

USA Today had a wonderful story in today's edition about Korey's love and concern for others. Just last week, Korey visited with Steven Arnold, who had been an assistant coach when Stringer played at Harding High School in Warren, Ohio. Coach Arnold